

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 19<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2023

HOMES AND SAVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 7<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2022

“535 DRAFT OLDER PERSONS HOUSING STRATEGY (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 was presented by the Operational Manager, Public Housing Services and by representatives of Housing LIN, who had provided consultancy support in drafting this Strategy. This had been agreed in principle by Cabinet but had been referred to Scrutiny for consideration.

The Strategy had been produced to ensure that the Council was responding to the housing challenges faced specifically by older people in the Vale Glamorgan.

The representatives from Housing LIN provided a short presentation to the Committee, detailing the approach used to develop this Strategy (i.e. review of best practice, use of focus groups), its ‘vision’ and intentions (i.e. ‘to secure the best quality of life for older people to live as independently as possible in later life’), how the Strategy could be achieved (i.e. either supporting older people to stay in their homes or to enable them to move on to housing better suited to their needs, as well as greater community, health and social care involvement), as well as the associated actions required (ranging from a review of / consultation concerning the Council's sheltered housing services, through to encouraging private and other social housing providers to build more suitable accommodation).

Following on from the presentation of the report, the Committee raised the following comments and questions:

- On the Vice-Chair’s question around the impact of rising dementia in the older population and how this could be reconciled with the Strategy’s aim of older people living independently, it was explained that work was being undertaken with colleagues in Adult Services to provide delivery of care strategies in order to support the housing strategy. Also, the Strategy looked at offering housing support at various stages of their life and to allow them wherever possible to remain within their locality and next to their support networks.
- On the Vice-Chair’s follow up questions around the mechanism for the review of the Strategy and linking in with partners concerning this and what engagement there had been with private house builders in terms of providing affordable and accessible housing to older people, it was explained that the strategy tied in with a number of partners and services, i.e. the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and health and social care partners, which also meant additional funding for integrated care. On private housebuilders, discussions had already started with them regarding housing site suitability,

with the Strategy providing an evidence base for Planning to help inform the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and private builders on the most appropriate housing for older person and the most suitable 'mix' of types of accommodation.

- On Councillor Hanks' query on the Penarth care / retirement village, it was explained that this had been recently approved by the Council's Planning Committee and discussions were being held with Wales and West Housing Association in taking the project forward. Further updates would be brought to Committee in due course. On the 'step down' accommodation / units in Cowbridge (utilised in order to help stop 'bed blocking' in hospitals by giving patients a means of leaving hospital safely), there were two of these, with a maximum length of twelve weeks. Take up / occupancy was relatively low, in part due to these being optional for older persons leaving hospital, and the Council was looking to maximise their use more effectively, as had been seen at similar units in Penarth.
- Councillor Perkes queried what the process was to implement the Strategy and what planning there was to ensure that the necessary infrastructure was in place to support older persons and an increasing aging population in the Vale in their housing choices. It was explained that the Strategy had an Action Plan appended in order to set out the timelines, etc., around its implementation, but this was still in the process of being finalised, with some dates and deadlines proving to difficult to specify, i.e. the building of further social housing, specific to older person needs, dependent on the provision of future funding and the need to prioritise a range of competing needs to house various groups.
- On the Councillor's follow up question about the ability of families to build or convert accommodation for older relatives within their homes or adjacent land, it was explained that some planning restrictions had been lifted to help enable this wherever possible, with further changes needing to be fed back to WG and the review of the Local development Plan (LDP).
- Councillor Morgan urged the Committee to get behind this report and the need to look at planning and other areas of policy (via lobbying WG) to ensure that older persons within the Vale could remain within their local communities i.e. for there to be a presumption that older persons could seek to build a modest single person dwelling within their garden or grounds. This would also benefit their local communities and businesses (i.e. the significant contribution of older persons to voluntary work in their localities) and remove the 'fear factor' for older persons on their future housing needs.
- The Vice-Chair stressed the importance that all generations of residents of the Vale were consulted on this Strategy, to ensure that it continued to be fit for purpose in the years ahead, by taking into account their aspirations.
- On Councillor Hennessy's query on the new in-home emergency call system for older residents, it was explained that take up for Council tenants remained high and it remained their choice to have the new Telecare lifeline system or not.
- On Councillor Carroll's query about Penarth Care / Retirement Village, it was explained that it was not strictly correct to describe it as a 'retirement village' but rather it entailed the bespoke provision of older persons accommodation in this particular locality, combining a sheltered housing scheme and an existing residential care home, based on affordable tenure. There was no

intention at this stage that the extra care accommodation would include 'for sale' units.

- The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services endorsed the Strategy as a sustainable means of housing older persons in their localities and within their support networks, as well as addressing an aging population and the additional needs this would bring to social and health care. However, the Council would need to manage the expectations of residents and tenants around such housing and related support due to growing budgetary constraints.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the Cabinet reference and report, subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the following views of the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee be considered by Cabinet prior to the final Strategy being agreed, namely:

- The importance of the Strategy to consider the impact of dementia on housing older persons and the complex needs and support associated with this as well as the effects of a growing aging population within the Vale of Glamorgan.
- The importance of keeping the Strategy under constant review and monitoring, with the need to also link in with other relevant organisations (such as Public Health bodies, Registered Social Landlords and private house builders and developers) around support, availability, affordability and accessibility to appropriate housing for older persons.
- The importance of the Strategy and Action Plan to lay out the process for implementing the Strategy and plan for the infrastructure required to house and support older persons, i.e. to support older persons to live in their existing homes.
- For the Council, as part of the Strategy, to engage with Welsh Government in order to review their planning policies to allow the development of older persons accommodation within the communities they live in already, and adjacent to, or within the grounds of, their existing accommodation.
- The Council looks to engage with all age groups around this Strategy in order to account for the aspirations of future generations, that it is fit for purpose and to demystify or to remove the 'fear factor' of what housing an older person means going forward.

#### Reason for recommendation

To ensure that Cabinet make a fully informed decision on the final Strategy.”